

FRANKFOLK

A MAGAZINE OF
VOL II NO 3

AMERICAN FOLK LORE
APRIL ISSUE



AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP
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LEADER
NEW YORK CITY



"PROMENADE"

Official organ of the American Square Dance Group
 "The purpose of the American Square Dance Group shall be to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with all who entertain similar views."

A.S.D.G. Constitution.

"Promenade" is published ten times a year, with one summer edition.

SUBSCRIPTION

Editor - in- chief..E.Mayo	\$1.00.....yearly
Circulation Manager.. A.Swartz	.15....single mailed copy
Temporary Headquarters.. 585 West 214th St., New York City..	
Lo 7-0174	

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FOLK DANCE IN EDUCATION

Those of us who have danced folk dances know what great fun they are, and most of us are aware of their value as recreation. But I wonder how many of us have really thought deeply of the possibilities of folk dancing as an education.

We know, for instance, that community activities, such as singing, dancing, acting, crafts and such, have become increasingly popular. Various group leaders have used folk material to great advantage with different age groups, and in some schools this material is being taught with varying degrees of success.

But the field is so vast, the material so unlimited, and the possibilities for combining the many branches of folk lore are so numerous, that it is almost a crime against human beings not to incorporate folk lore with education.

Throughout my entire experience as a leader of folk groups, as a teacher in private schools, and as a camp counselor, I have felt a tremendous responsibility...to the people whose folk culture I present and represent, and to the students who receive this material from me.

In my work with young people particularly, I have felt this responsibility very deeply. Although there is no doubt at all in my mind that plain wholesome fun is important in life, there is something deeper than the desire to impart a little joy that lies behind my convictions about the manner in which folk culture should be presented to anyone regardless of age, environment or nationality.

Take, for instance, that terrific "buggabo" which faces every human being, that boy-and-girl problem. Through the use of the folk dance, particularly the American play-party game, this can be met and overcome quite simply. For there must be "ladies and gents" if these dances are to be danced. And the elements of play and group activity overcome the ordinary shyness which engulfs the inexperienced dancer when confronted with the "social" ballroom dance. The very fact that partners are changed, usually with each repetition of the dance, makes for tolerance and group feeling, and group feeling is the foundation of democracy. The individual is important to the whole, and the well-being of the whole depends on the individual.

So, you grab the nearest partner and join in the fun! Community feeling, through "mass pressure", can be developed through this pleasant means, for one cannot be snobbish or insist on spoiling the pleasure of the others by inattention, when the culprit is so easily spotted. There are times when a person must sacrifice personal feelings for the sake of the group as a whole, and this can be clearly demonstrated through folk dancing.

There are other aspects to this job of teaching folk dancing. There are the obvious ones of teaching tolerance, breaking down pre judices, building up understanding. Perhaps, in this day and age, when tolerance and sympathy are at a distinctly low ebb, this is one of the most important angles.

There is also the problem of the social misfit, the physically handicapped, the shy. Let me give you a few case histories. There was the young child whose speech defect was preventing her from developing into a normal, socially adjusted person. She had terrific temper tantrums whenever she felt the need of gaining attention or when she was misunderstood. Suddenly she discovered that she could sing the words of the play-party games and no one paid any attention to her mistakes, for everyone was busy dancing and enjoying the fun. Now this little girl feels no hesitancy in getting up in front of a large group of people and expressing her thoughts, even though she cannot always make herself clear. I don't think for a moment that folk dancing alone accomplished all this, but I do know that it was a means through which this child gained self-confidence, and therefore was very important in her development.

Then there was the little boy whose coordination was so poor, whose shyness so tremendous, that at first glance one thought him sub-normal. Folk dance class became very important to this boy, and was one of the first places where he could show his classmates that he really is a brilliant student. For at the end of his first year at our school, during the informal review which I always subject the children to, and in which I play the tunes for the dances and have the pupils recognize the dance, name the country from which the dances came and tell something about the country as well as locate it on the map, this youngster not only recognized the tunes, but named the capitals of the countries, the populations, chief industries and in general floored all of us with his knowledge! This boy is now one of the outstanding basket ball players in his school.

And what about all the rest, the many youngsters and older folks too, who have acquired new interests or rediscovered long forgotten talents, who have developed new interests and hobbies, such as sketching, writing, playing instruments, yes and even reading, through the medium of a folk group? There are too many cases to even attempt to numerate them. And I speak only of my own group and students!

Folk culture, which springs from the people of the different countries, from the habits, superstitions, even the climates terrains and industries, is surely a most effective way of teaching history, geography and social studies.

Though, unfortunately, we cannot pretend that wars will cease, prejudices be overcome completely, social evils be eliminated and joy be brought to the world through the mere practice of folk dancing and singing, still, we think it will help an infinitesimal bit towards making a better world for the future folk to live in.

AMERICAN FOLK SONG FESTIVAL

by Jean Thomas
"The Traipsin' Woman"
(Written especially for "Promenade")

The eleventh annual American Folk Song Festival will be held on Sunday June 8th at Traipsin' Woman Cabin on the Mayo Trail, eighteen miles south of Ashland, Boyd County, Kentucky, under the direction of this author, who founded the festival. When employed as a court stenographer in the mountains of Kentucky, I came upon the Singin' Gatherin' quite by accident one Sunday when traveling in a jolt wagon along a lonely creek. After years of going back there each season on the second Sunday in June to revisit the Singin' Gatherin', a centuries-old tradition of the Kentucky mountains, the mountain minstrels were finally persuaded to bring their Singin' Gatherin' down nigh the level land. The first event brought only a handful of curious listeners. Today the American Folk Song Festival which grew out of the Singin' Gatherin' has become a national institution drawing tens of thousands of visitors from all over the nation, even from far corners of the earth. In Kentucky, it ranks in drawing power second only to the Derby.

The mountain Minstrels sit grouped on the great rustic stage in front of a tiny windowless cabin nestled between the high hills that give back the echo of their song; warning and wassail songs, frolic and lonesome songs, sea chanteys, gay ditties, solemn hymns to the Gregorian chant of the sixth century. Mountain boys and girls re-enact the tradition of the Infare-wedding in which they step the tune to the singing of Elizabethan ballads including "The Chimney Sweeper" and "Twa Sisters".

Jilson Setters, the Singin' Fiddler of Lost Hope Hollow, only primitive Kentucky mountain minstrel ever to have crossed the sea to sing his own and Elizabethan ballads in the royal Albert Hall before Their Majesties King George and Queen Mary, will sing many ancient ballads playing his own accompaniment on the ancient fiddle he carried to London. He will sing also his latest ballad called "Sad London Town", telling of the war's destruction there.

'Nobility' of the mountains will be present to sing ballads handed down in their own families from the time of Mary Stuart and Good Queen Bess. Lyda Messer Caudill of Rowan County, descendant of Mary Queen of Scots, wearing a costume of Royal Stuart plaid, will sing Scottish ballads handed down from the time of Mary Stuart; Blanche Preston Jones, a daughter of Big Sandy, descendant of Lady Elizabeth Calvert, will sing sea chanteys brought into the wilderness by her sea-going forbears. Elizabeth Lovell Flat, proud to claim kin with Lord Lovell, will sing, with her three daughters, the ballad of Lord Lovell and his milk white steed. Mrs. Juliett Lansdowne Powers, descendant of Lord Lansdowne of England, now in her ninetieth year, though of firm and resonant voice, will offer a prayer for peace.

Little Margie May Gullett in a homespun frock of linsey woolsey and her small brother Harry Lee, in homespun jeans and knitted galluses, will sing an Elizabethan ballad, also "Joseph and Mary", sometimes called the Cherry Tree Carol. They recently

AMERICAN FOLK SONG FESTIVAL

continued

appeared on station WJZ in New York and received 4000 fan letters in appreciation of their charming singing on the network. Their photograph appears in the April issue of Ladies Home Journal made during their visit to the City.

Little Babe Caldwell will play his accompaniment on a home-made gourd banjo and sing a courting ballad.

Brother Willie Caudill of Rowan County will lead the Rowan County Gregorian Chanters in chanting a footwashing and funeralizing hymn tradition in the Kentucky mountains, yet chanted to the Gregorian chant of the sixth century.

There will be a native art exhibit, the most unusual picture being the one made by Randall McCoy Hatfield, grandson of Devil Anse Hatfield. Young Hatfield had no training and painted the little cabin. Rosanna McCoy and Jonse Hatfield, son of Devil Anse kept their tryst. The picture is called "Rosanna's Tryst". This work of young Randall McCoy Hatfield started the native art exhibit in eastern Kentucky which has since become an organization in itself. Through this native art exhibit, this author has discovered much rare talent among untrained mountain dwellers.

At this year's festival, mountain minstrels will sing the ballad of the Rowan County Troubles which is the story of the Martin-Tolliver feud, also the ballad of "The Love of Rosanna McCoy", which is in part the story of the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, also the ballad, "The Fate of Effie and Richard Duke", the story of the killing by Richard Duke of the Big Sandy, of his wife and himself.

"When singin' comes in, fightin' goes out" says Jilson Setters, who says that the Singin' Gatherin', known as the American Folk Song Festival, has brought peace among people and joy to them in song.

The Festival begins hymn singing at sunup and prayer and sermons by Primitive Baptist preachers at a typical church in the mountains where the faithful hold service under the great shaded trees. There will also be a Kentucky mountain "Eisteddfod" although the mountain folk do not call it that. The Hamm family of Rowan County, all poets and ballad singers, will hold their family meetings at the festival, reciting their own poems and singing their own ballads under the leadership of Edgar Hamm, once a teacher in the mountain schools of Kentucky.

The Festival is as free as salvation. There are wide meadow lands adjoining the festival site where thousands of cars can be safely parked.

The Mayo Trail leading to the Festival will be well-marked and red-capped guides will also be stationed along the trail to guide motorists to this, America's most unusual festival.



NOW THAT SPRING IS HERE

Spring is always the season for festivals and when Spring is here the folk field is not far behind! The Spring Festival of the Country Dance Society is being held at the Royal Windsor here in New York on Saturday, April 26th when country, contra and square dances will be featured by the members of the group formerly known as the English Folk Dance Society. This annual festival is always colorfully and artistically arranged, and we are sure that even in this year of trial and sadness for these English folk, the festival will be as lovely as ever.

Then there is the eighth annual National Folk Festival to be held in Washington, D.C., on May 1st, 2nd and 3rd. This festival is sponsored by the Washington Post Folk Festival Association and Sarah Gertrude Knott is the national director. The National Folk Festival believes, to quote from the news release, "that national unity may in no way be better advanced than through the encouragement of people to join together in a joyful presentation of the rich heritages that compose American folk life." That is, of course, a pretty big order, but then, folk dancers are enthusiastic, at least!

And, in June, there is the festival on the Mayo Trail in Kentucky. But for further information regarding this festival see the article in this issue -- "American Folk Song Festival"



BOOK REVIEW



THE BUCKEYE COUNTRY
by Harlan Hatcher
H.C.Kinsey & Co, N.Y.

"Buckeye Country" which describes itself as "a pageant of Ohio" has rapidly become one of our favorite books. It covers a tremendous amount of material and offers a wealth of knowledge for those interested in true Americana. Its subjects range from Johnny Appleseed to modern industry, from stories of early pioneers to present day museums of art.

Mr. Hatcher loves and knows his country with his heart as well as with his mind, and you find yourself sharing his pride. Before the book is finished, you discover yourself to be very Ohio-conscious. The author comes from a long line of Ohio folks, and there is a feeling expressed throughout the pages of this book, a feeling of roots deep in the earth. Harlan Hatcher sounds like the sort of chap who went barefooted in the summertime, and knows the best fishing spots in the country. He must know all the far-away, secret corners of his state of Ohio!

The chapters bear proud titles such as "Grandfathers", "The Lay of the Land", "Almost Forgotten Men", "Ohio's taste in Houses" and many others. The story of the Blennerhassetts and their island paradise is particularly fascinating, and the bits of quotations from various diaries of the past generations lend a color to the story of the building of a nation.

The illustrations are excellent and numerous, with many pictures of present-day Ohio, as well as quaint prints and reproductions of portraits of outstanding citizens of the state.

For an important additions to your library of Americana, be sure to procure this book, and you will find that you can return to it, time after time, and always enjoy the repeated reading as much as the first.

THE GOLD RUSH SONG BOOK

compiled by Eleanor Black and Sidney Robertson

Published by the Colt Press, of San Francisco, California, this songbook "comprising a group of twenty-five authentic ballads as they were sung by the men who dug for gold in California during the period of the great gold rush of 1849", this book is very pleasant and should prove of great value not only to collectors of Americana, but to teachers and camp counselors. It is the sort of book that people like to use for informal sings, and boys and men will particularly enjoy this hearty musical fare.

Diligent research through old songsters published years ago, many hours spent conversing with old-timers in the mines, and sheer love of folk-songs have gone into this work, resulting in a songbook of unusual charm. The tiny illustrations add flavor to the texts, and the Introduction with its explanation of the proper way to sing folk-songs give one the feeling that these songs have truly sprung from American life.

One feature of the book which adds tremendously to its value is the text sources which accompany each song. The book includes such old-time favorites as "Sweet Betsy from Pike" and "Joe Bowers", as well as other lesser known folk songs.

DIALS

The widespread interest in square dancing has been emphasized in the past few months by the release of three albums of square dances.

SWING YOUR PARTNER Victor C-34

This album contains several types of square dances, six dances being recorded on twelve inch records and two quadrilles on ten inch records. The music and calling at times sound a little too authentic for comfort, especially since the calls are sung, and not always synchronized with the tunes. However, the calls are clear, and the descriptive booklet with the explanations of the dances make this a very practical set of records to own. The dances presented include "Hodge No. 3 Quadrille", "Buffalo Girl", "Chasse Your Partner", "Darling Nellie Gray", "Duck That Oyster", "Lady Round the Lady", and "Life on the Ocean Wave". The tempo makes for comfortable and pleasant dancing. The caller is Paul Conklin, and the music is supplied by Bill Dickinson's Tuxedo Colonels.

SQUARE DANCES Columbia C-47

This album is most attractive with its red checked cover, and presents an entirely different style of calling and playing. Some of the calling is done in singing style, but at all times it is easy to understand these calls. There are five dances in all on ten inch records, and one record is given over to square dance tunes without any calling, which should prove helpful to groups who wish to develop their own callers. The music is slow, perhaps too slow for the new-timers, but the oldsters should enjoy it, for it allows them time to put in the fancy steps which only the "good old" dancers seem to know how to perform. At times the caller's voice seems a little querulous; however, the recordings are pleasant enough, and certainly well worth adding to your collection. The calls and directions are given on the inside covers of the album and are clear, giving first descriptions of general figures, and then specific dances are described in detail. The caller for this set of records is Lawrence Loy, and the music is supplied by Carson Robison and his Old Timers.

COWBOY SQUARE DANCES Decca 226

These records are, by far, the most exciting to listen to. The music is fast, good and authentic for certain parts of the country. The calls are rhymed patter, and after you catch on to the secret of it, most fascinating to hear. These calls have a flavor about them, a homespun sort of feeling, with plenty of local color put in. There are six dances: "Round the Couple, Swing when you meet", "Chase that rabbit", "Bird in a cage and three rail pen", "Boy around a boy, girl around a girl", "Round that couple, go through and swing", "Lady round the lady and the gents solo". There is no descriptive booklet with this album, but we think the brochure is rather good. (It is one of a series of booklets written for Decca by Margot!)

NOTES OF INTEREST

Apparently, members of the Washington A S-D G are doing some work in connection with the National Folk Festival to be held in that city on May 1st, 2nd, and 3rd.

They are also helping out with the Saturday evening dance to be held at the Burlington Hotel, in which the audience of the Festival will be able to participate. We are proud of this group and their work, for it is a new division of the A S-D G.



A square set from the New York section of the A S-D G is planning on driving down to be with the Washington group on Sat. May 3rd.

And while we were on the subject of the Washington group, we would like to announce that groups open house party on Saturday May 10th, at 8.30. The party will be held at Pierce Hall, 15th and Harvard St. N.W.

Margot has been invited to appear as a member of the teaching staff of the pre-convention conference of dance teachers in Atlantic City on April 27th and 28th. This conference is arranged for those members of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, who are particularly interested in the dance.

We are still struggling along, trying to learn how to cut stencils, and run the mimeograph machine. Please bear with us a while longer!

